



Urban Forestry Commission briefing August 1, 2012

Last year we briefed the Commission and shared with you that:

- Seattle's forest is dying and without direct intervention 70% of the forest canopy in our natural areas could be dead within 20 years.
- This loss would have significant costs.
- The Green Seattle Partnership is part of the solution with a goal to restore 2,500 acres by 2025
- The program is at a critical juncture and sustainable funding (at the \$3 million/year level) will require direct political support from both the community and the City.

We also talked about GSP's accomplishments:

- 530,000 volunteer hours
- 130 people directly adopted 80 parks
- The City has invested close to \$11 million
- Forterra raised close to \$3 million
- Implementation partners such as EarthCorps and Nature Consortium have invested close to \$6 million
- We have over 800 acres in restoration

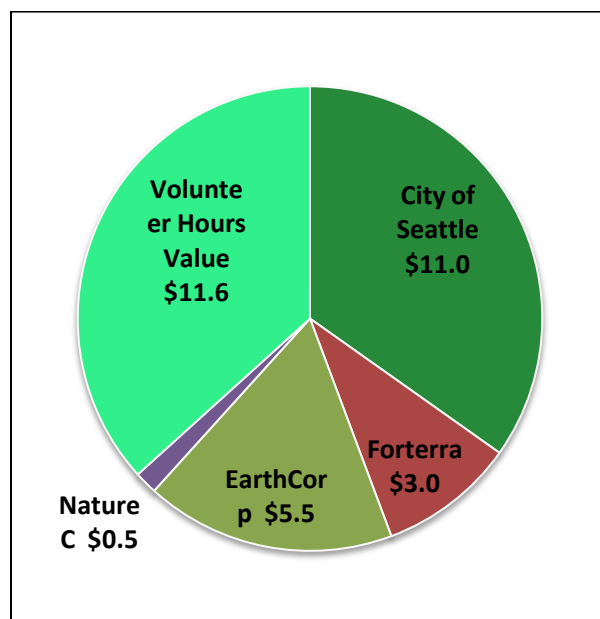
Today we would like to give you an update on the Program's budget situation.

The GSP and Community Match

Core to the GSP is the community match. The City's investments in contractors, partners and the community have historically generated a 2 to 1 match in volunteer labor, donated materials, professional services, and/or cash donations from community members.

Over the past six years, the City has invested \$11 million from a combination of Cumulative Reserve Funds (CRF), the Pro Parks Levy, the 2008 Parks & Green Spaces Levy and SPU funding. This \$11 million has fueled an estimated \$20.5 million of in-kind support. Our non-profit partners go far beyond the contracted work the City pays them for. EarthCorps estimates their organization has contributed/matched \$5.5 million toward restoration efforts in Seattle's natural areas (includes work done before the initiation of the Green Seattle Partnership). Nature Consortium estimates they have contributed/matched close to \$500K toward restoration efforts. Herron Helpers has raised over \$250K in the last six years to fund restoration efforts for Kiwanis Ravine, and our Forest Stewards have been awarded grants ranging from \$10K to \$250K for the restoration of their sites. Our most recent partner, Seattle Goodwill raised \$100K this year to help fund the Youth Green Corps, a summer youth employment program that focused on restoration work.

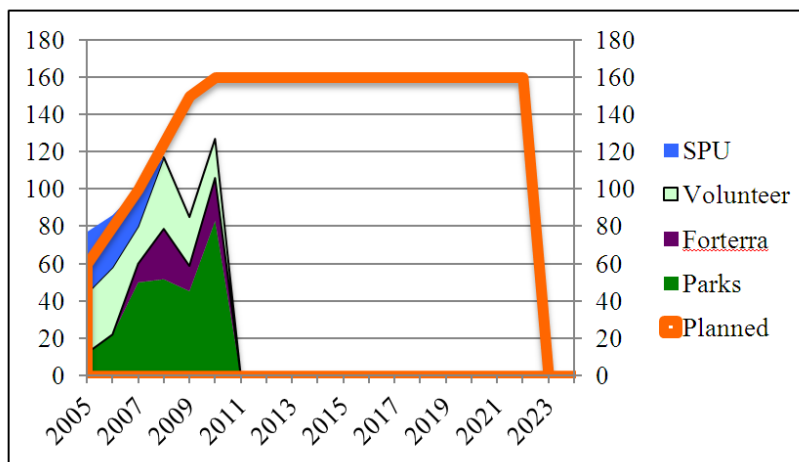
Figure 1. Actual City of Seattle Investment Compared to Contributed or Matched Community Investment (in Millions)



Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Operations & Maintenance (O&M) dollars:

As of 2011, the GSP capital program has accomplished 30% of the 2,500 acre project scope (Figure 2). Nevertheless, as we restore acreage, we need to add O&M funding to keep invasive weeds from returning. Maintenance of these forested areas is projected to cost \$500/acre, which is relatively inexpensive compared to the projected \$15,000/acre cost for a developed park maintained to industry standards. The cost to maintain the completed 2,500 acres is projected to be \$1.25 million dollars.

Figure 2. New Acres brought into Restoration by Partner compared to 20-year Plan

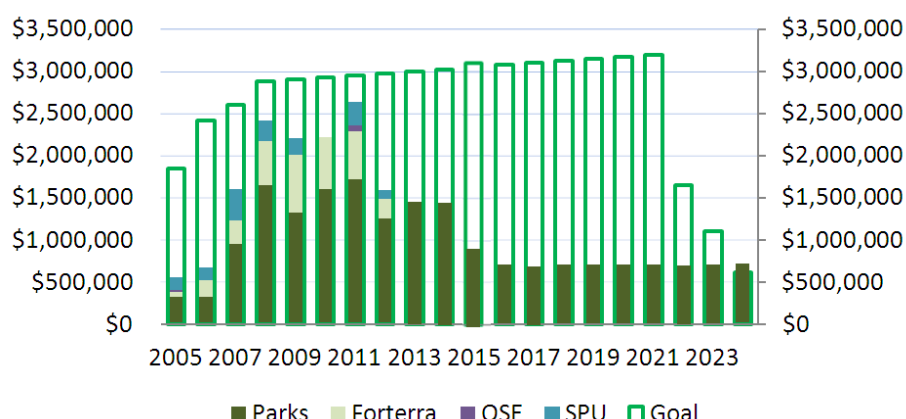


Funding Challenges

The GSP is falling behind on its restoration targets due to diminished funding levels. As Figure 3 demonstrates, the GSP 20-year Strategic Plan expects City of Seattle to be at about \$3 million/year. We project, given current REET and the last of the 2008 Parks and Green Space Levy, funding will sustain at about \$1.4 million through 2014. In 2015, the 2008 Parks Levy funding substantially runs out (\$103K)

and if the economy does not improve or we do not find a long term source of funding, the GSP program will be in serious financial peril.

Figure 3. Actual and Projected Funding Compared to Original 20-year Plan



Forterra has reached its original intended goal to raise \$3.0 million for the Partnership by 2011, and in 2012 entered into a contractual phase with the City. In support of Forterra’s work for the GSP, Parks will contract services with Forterra for \$145K in 2012 only (funding for this contract will be \$45K from Parks and \$100K from SPU). Forterra has committed to \$235K in leveraged value in 2012.

Future of Green Seattle Partnership

The GSP is a cross-purpose effort and fulfills broader City priorities such as accomplishing Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan, engaging the community in volunteerism, education, training, and employment opportunities for youth, revitalizing neighborhoods, retaining Seattle’s character as the “Emerald” City and providing natural systems that lessen the impacts of urbanization both socially and environmentally.

The GSP is the only program in the City that focuses attention on our public forested park land. The program is intentionally built on the dedication of the community and therefore requires relatively little funding compared to most maintenance programs for the same acreage. We are only one-third through the program and already the level of investment is estimated conservatively at \$31.5 million from government, community and partners. To be successful we must sustain public funding until all 2,500 acres of parkland are brought into restoration.

If the economy does not improve and projected REET levels from 2013-14 sustain in 2015, we will see program funding drop from \$1.2 million to \$727K in 2015 and \$583K in 2016. At \$1.2 million, there is enough funding to bring 60 acres into restoration each year and we could accomplish the 20-year 2500 acre goal in 30 years. However, at \$583K of funding the program will be dramatically reduced particularly in the new acres we bring into restoration and the volunteer hours contributed. If 2016 level of funding sustains, it will take the program 143 years beyond the originally proposed completion date of 2025.

Year	Projected funding	New acres	Acres in restoration	Volunteer hours	Forest Stewards	Completion date with funding current year
2012	\$1.5M	75	737	88,000	130	2036
2013	\$1.2M	60	807	75,000	125	2040
2014	\$1.2M	60	867	75,000	100	2040
2015	\$727K	30	927	35,000	75	2064
2016 & beyond	\$583K	10	937	25,000	50	2168

Potential Resources Support in 2015 and beyond

The GSP strategy has been working very well but it needs sustainable funding. Staff is exploring potential funding alternatives, examples of those are included below.

- Assess the services our forested parklands provide and consider integrating ‘green infrastructure’ into ‘engineered infrastructure’ to better serve a growing Seattle at less cost.
 - We should be able to answer questions such as ‘does higher quality forested parkland result in quantifiable benefits in stormwater retention, air pollution and erosion control?’; ‘is the cost of restoring and managing forested parkland less expensive than engineered solutions for the same benefit?’
- Consider other models from different cities, such as New York, that demonstrates the benefits of a foundation directed towards developing sources of funding for contracted restoration and helping fund partner programs who leverage resources for field work.
- Create developer permit offsets to restore forested area as a way to mitigate the impact of building at greater density.
 - South Lake Union created a tax improvement district to help offset the planned development.
- Explore O&M Parks Levy or Park Maintenance District that factors in green infrastructure in the environmental category.
- Outreach to new private and non-profit partners to join the GSP.

Green Seattle Partnership’s Structure

